

## **ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

Vertebra bodies in the human spine are stabilized through the use of minimally invasive surgery for the implantation of an elongate implant plate assembly having spaced first and second screw receiving socket elements which are configured for respective attachment to first and 5 second spaced vertebra with the aid of bone fixation screws and these elements are slidably received with respect to each other for adjustably changing the distance between the screw receiving socket elements. A lock assembly is also provided for selectively locking the first and second screw receiving elements from further relative sliding. An elongate insertion tool is releaseably secured to the proximal end of this plate assembly whereby the tool and the elongate plate assembly extend 10 together end to end in their direction of elongation when secured together, and the insertion tool is configured for manipulating the plate assembly as a whole and for remotely manipulating the screw receiving socket elements for adjusting the distance therebetween. The plate assembly is inserted through an incision and manipulated and advanced with the insertion tool to provide minimally invasive insertion, and after fixation of the implant assembly with bone fixation screws is further 15 utilized to adjust the degree of compression on the vertebra, and thereafter the implant is locked in position to prevent further relative movement between the screw receiving elements of the plate assembly.